

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Social Science Program

Guidelines and Approval Form for Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys



December 2001

**Electronic copies of this document and the attached approval form are available on
the National Park Service Social Science Program website at:
<http://www.nps.gov/socialscience/tech/survey.htm>**

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Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) sponsors public surveys to provide park managers with information needed for park planning, management, operations and evaluation of performance related to protecting park resources and meeting the needs of the public. In consultation with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), the NPS has developed an expedited approval process for NPS-sponsored public surveys. It streamlines the approval process required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. This booklet provides guidelines as of 1 December 2001 for using the expedited process, and 3 copies of the necessary approval form.

The program of expedited approval applies to NPS-sponsored surveys that collect data from specific segments of the public—*park visitors, potential park visitors, and residents of communities near parks*.

The original program of expedited approval, approved by OMB in August 1998, applied to surveys of park visitors only. The 3-year extension, granted in late 2001, expanded the program of expedited approval to surveys of the populations mentioned above.

Authorities

The authorities for the expedited approval process are:

- Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13 May 22, 1995)
- 5 CFR Part 1320: Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public; Regulatory Changes Reflecting Recodification of the Paperwork Reduction Act
- United States Code, Title 44, Chapter 25: Coordination of Federal Information Policy

- Office of Management and Budget, The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995: Implementing Guidance (draft, August 16, 1999)
- Department of the Interior Collection of Information from the Public: Interim Guidelines (March 20, 1997)
- NPS Director's Order #78, Social Science: Section III (draft, November 2001)

Within the Scope of the Expedited Approval - Topic Areas

To qualify for the expedited approval, all questions in a survey must fit within one or more of the approved topic areas and must be approved by the NPS and OMB. Researchers have flexibility, within accepted standards of good survey design and OMB regulations, to develop specific questions within the topic areas. The seven topic areas are identified below. A description of the scope of each topic area follows.

Topic Area 1 - Individual Characteristics

Individual characteristics are attributes of individual park visitors or visitor groups, potential visitors or groups, and residents of communities near parks. Some examples include: age, zip code or country of residence, group type and size, ethnicity, race, disabilities/impairments, language abilities, socio-economic status, level of educational attainment, and frequency of visits. Individual characteristics relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included in the scope of this topic area.

Topic Area 2 - Trip/Visit Characteristics

Trip/visit characteristics include aspects of travel which affect a trip or decisions which visitors make prior to, during, or following their trip to parks, related areas and nearby

communities. Also included are aspects of travel influencing potential visitors to units of the National Park System. Examples include use of overnight accommodations, transportation, trip route, trip origin, trip destination(s), payment of entrance/user fees, ability to obtain tickets, and length of trip. Trip characteristics relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included in the scope of this topic area.

Topic Area 3 - Individual Activities and Uses of Park Resources

Individuals participate in many activities during their visits to parks, related areas and nearby communities. Important examples include: sightseeing, visiting visitor centers, day hiking, backpacking, picnicking, camping, shopping, observing wildlife, attending ranger-led programs, taking photographs, boating, fishing, and many others. Individuals use a variety of park or related area resources including natural and cultural resources as well as park infrastructure and visitor services when they visit these areas. Some examples include roads, trails, restrooms, parking lots, drinking water, viewpoints and overlooks, visitor centers, gift shops, stores, and lodges/motels. Depending on the site, individuals may harvest berries, fish, game animals, firewood, or sea shells; travel cross-country in roadless parts of the park or related areas; travel through historic structures or landscapes; or handle historic objects. Individual activities or uses of natural and cultural resources which are relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included in the scope of this topic area.

Topic Area 4 - Individual Expenditures

Individual expenditures include both time and dollar costs that individuals incur visiting parks and surrounding areas. Individual expenditures data include

information related to expenditure patterns in the park or surrounding area (direct expenditures) and to expenditures associated with their travels to access the park, nearby community or related areas (indirect expenditures). Individual expenditures which are relevant to the mission, management, and/or operations of National Park System units are included in the scope of this topic area.

Topic Area 5 - Individual Evaluation of Park Services

Individual evaluation data include quality and importance ratings of services which individuals used or could have used during a visit to a park or nearby area. Evaluation of services and facilities provided by NPS, concessioners, or other cooperators in the park or nearby area are included in the scope of this topic area.

Topic Area 6 - Individual Perceptions of their Park Experiences

Individual perceptions data include the public's awareness and observations of the natural and social environments in the parks and nearby areas they visit. Included are individual perceptions of the values and benefits of parks and nearby areas, and how public awareness and individual observations influence overall experiences. Individual experiences regarding natural and cultural resources, other visitors, park and other employees, and infrastructure and services in the parks and nearby areas are included in the scope of this topic area.

Topic Area 7 - Individual Opinions On Park Management

Individual opinions about park management include the ideas, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, and values that visitors, potential visitors and residents of communities near parks express regarding all aspects of NPS park management. Included in the scope of this topic area are individual opinions about how the parks

manage natural and cultural resources, maintain physical structures, guide human uses of park resources and facilities, and provide educational and other services to the visitors, potential visitors, and residents of communities near parks.

Surveys outside the scope of the expedited approval require clearance through the standard information collection approval process outlined by the Paperwork Reduction Act and its implementing regulations. For information on the standard approval process, please contact the NPS Social Science Program.

Submission and Approval Process

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for initiating a request for expedited approval, and providing a complete and accurate package of approval materials. This package must include:

- (a) a completed expedited approval form,
- (b) a complete copy of the proposed survey instrument, and
- (c) other supporting materials (such as cover letters, introductory scripts and follow-up letters).

The expedited approval form is available in this booklet and online at the following website:

<http://www.nps.gov/socialscience/tech.survey.htm>

The request for expedited approval, and submission of a complete and accurate approval package, must be made at least **45** calendar days prior to the first day the PI wishes to administer the survey instrument to the public.

The NPS will provide an administrative and technical review of the submitted materials, and notify the PI of the results. If revisions are necessary, the PI should complete them as soon as possible, so that the NPS can forward

materials to OMB in a timely fashion. If no revisions are necessary, the NPS will promptly submit the approval package to OMB for final action. A description of the steps in the expedited approval process follows.

Step 1

The PI completes the Expedited Approval Form, and prepares the proposed survey instrument. Instructions are provided for each item on the form (see page 5). In addition, the proposed survey instrument must have each question clearly identified as to the topic area under which it is being submitted. Please list topic areas by number and title; for example "Topic Area 4–Individual Expenditures."

Step 2

The PI submits the completed form and a copy of the proposed survey instrument to the NPS Social Science Program for review. The submission package must include (a) any introductory script used in contacting the public, (b) all cover letters, postcard reminders or follow-up letters to be sent to potential respondents, (c) all survey questions, each question being clearly identified as to the topic area under which it is being submitted (number and title), (d) necessary Paperwork Reduction Act compliance language inserted into the survey instrument, and (e) any other supporting materials. For face-to-face information collections, such as interviews and focus groups, a short statement describing how the PI intends to communicate PRA compliance information to respondents is required in the description of the survey methodology.

All submission packages must be formatted as MS Word documents (any recent version up to and including MS Word 2000) and sent via email to the NPS Social Science Program at the following address:

brian_forist@partner.nps.gov

Step 3

The NPS Social Science Program staff conducts an administrative and technical review of the submission. The staff recommends (a) approval, (b) revision, (c) resubmission under the Standard Paperwork Reduction Act approval process, or (d) rejection of the proposed survey. The NPS Visiting Chief Social Scientist makes a decision based on the staff recommendation and the PI is promptly notified. Should a submission be rejected, the PI may submit an appeal, in writing, to the Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, for a final decision.

Step 4

If approved by the NPS, the NPS Social Science Program staff transmits the submission to OMB for final approval.

Step 5

OMB reviews the submission and notifies the NPS of approval or necessary revisions.

Step 6

If approved by OMB, the NPS Social Science Program staff notifies the PI immediately and assigns an OMB number, a unique NPS identification number, and an expiration date (not to exceed three years). The standard expiration date applied to expedited approvals is six months after the survey dates listed on the approval form (item 6). The PI should notify the NPS Social Science Program, in writing, if a different expiration date is required. Should OMB require any special conditions to the approval, the PI will be informed and the conditions must be met for approval.

Should OMB reject the submission or have specific questions about the survey instrument, the NPS Social Science Program staff will immediately inform the PI. The PI may submit an appeal of the OMB decision to the NPS Social Science Program, in

writing. The NPS Social Science Program will submit the PI's appeal to OMB and inform the PI of the results.

Step 7

The PI prepares a final survey instrument, submitting an archive copy to the NPS Social Science Program.

The final survey instrument must include the following: (a) the OMB number, (b) the unique NPS identification number, (c) the expiration date, and (d) the Paperwork Reduction Act compliance statement.

Additions or changes to a survey instrument after it has been approved, even within the specific topic areas, are not allowed by OMB. An exception is that questions may be deleted after approval by OMB, if necessary.

In addition, the PI must provide the NPS Social Science Program with an archive copy of the final report describing the results of the survey.

In addition to OMB approval, PIs conducting surveys within units of the National Park System may be required to have a National Park Service Scientific Research and Collecting Permit. These permits are issued by the specific park unit(s) in which the research takes place. Parks may have additional requirements as well. NPS Scientific Research and Collecting Permits can be applied for online at the following website:

<http://science.nature.nps.gov/research>

Expedited Approval Form Instructions

1. Insert a title for the proposed study and include park name, if appropriate (e.g., Yosemite National Park Visitor Study). Include the date of submission of the approval request to NPS.
2. Summarize the proposed study with an abstract not to exceed 150 words.
3. Fill in the PI contact information. The NPS Social Science Program will communicate with the PI listed here throughout the entire approval process. For studies in which graduate students are taking an active role, please list the faculty advisor as the PI.
4. Fill in the park or program liaison contact information. List only one park liaison for the purposes of the approval process, even if a PI is conducting a multi-park study.
5. List the park(s) in which the data collection will be conducted.
6. List the time period in which the survey will be conducted, including specific starting and ending dates. The starting date should be at least **45** days after the submission date. The request for expedited approval, and submission of a complete and accurate approval package, must be made at least **45** calendar days prior to the first day the PI wishes to administer the survey instrument to the public.
7. Check the type(s) of information collection instrument(s) that will be used. If other, please explain.
8. Provide a brief justification for the study, its purpose, goals, and utility to managers. NPS Social Science Program staff can provide assistance as needed.
9. Provide a description of the survey methodology. This description must be specific and include **each** of the following: (a) the respondent universe, (b) the sampling plan and all sampling procedures, including how individual respondents will be selected, (c) how the instrument will be administered, (d) expected response rate and confidence levels, and (e) strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias. A description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument is highly recommended.
10. Fill in the total number of initial contacts and the total number of expected respondents.
11. Fill in the estimated time to complete the initial contact and the survey instrument (in minutes).
12. Fill in the total number of burden hours. The burden on non-respondents (such as initial contact interviews) should be included in this total.
13. Provide a brief description of the reporting plan for the data being collected. This might include a final technical report to the park, a briefing for park managers, a *Park Science* article, a peer-reviewed journal article, etc. A copy of all survey reports must be archived with the NPS Social Science Program. Please note this in the reporting plan.



Social Science Program

Expedited Approval for NPS-Sponsored Public Surveys

1. Project Title |
Submission Date:

2. Abstract:
(not to exceed 150 words)

3. **Principal Investigator Contact Information**

First Name: Last Name:

Title:

Affiliation:

Street Address:

City: State: Zip code:

Phone: Fax:

Email:

4. **Park or Program Liaison Contact Information**

First Name: Last Name:

Title:

Park:

Park
Office/Division:

Street Address:

City: State: Zip code:

Phone: Fax:

Email:

Project Information

5. Park(s) Where Research is to be Conducted:

6. Survey Dates: (mm/dd/yyyy) to (mm/dd/yyyy)

7. Type of Information Collection Instrument (Check ALL that Apply)

- ☐ Mail-Back Questionnaire ☐ On-Site Questionnaire ☐ Face-to-Face Interview ☐ Telephone Survey ☐ Focus Groups
- ☐ Other (explain)

8. Survey Justification:
(Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)

9. Survey Methodology:
(Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)

(a) Respondent universe:

(b) Sampling plan/procedures:

(c) Instrument administration:

(d) Expected response rate/confidence levels:

(e) Strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias:

(f) Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended):

10. Total Number of Initial Contacts | Expected Respondents:

11. Estimated Time to Complete Initial Contact | Instrument (mins.):

12. Total Burden Hours:

13. Reporting Plan:



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3. Principal Investigator Contact Information

First Name: Last Name:

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Affiliation:

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City: State: Zip code:

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Submission Date:

2. Abstract:

(not to exceed 150 words)

3. Principal Investigator Contact Information

First Name: Last Name:

Title:

Affiliation:

Street Address:

City: State: Zip code:

Phone: Fax:

Email:

4. Park or Program Liaison Contact Information

First Name: Last Name:

Title:

Park:

Park
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Street Address:

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Email:

Project Information

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☐ Other (explain)

8. Survey Justification:
(Use as much space as needed; if necessary include additional explanation on a separate page.)

9. Survey Methodology:
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(a) Respondent universe:

(b) Sampling plan/procedures:

(c) Instrument administration:

(d) Expected response rate/confidence levels:

(e) Strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias:

(f) Description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or instrument (recommended):

10. Total Number of Initial Contacts | Expected Respondents:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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11. Estimated Time to Complete Initial Contact | Instrument (mins.):

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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12. Total Burden Hours:

13. Reporting Plan:

Checklist for Submitting a Request for Expedited Approval

- ☐ Survey population includes *only* park visitors, potential park visitors and/or residents of communities near parks.
- ☐ *All* questions in the survey instruments are within the scope of the topic areas covered by the expedited approval.
- ☐ The expedited approval package is being submitted to the NPS Social Science Program at least **45** days prior to the first day the PI wishes to administer the survey to the public.

The expedited approval package includes:

- ☐ a completed expedited approval form
- ☐ a copy of the survey instrument (with *each* question in the survey instrument clearly identified as to the topic area(s) under which it is being submitted)
- ☐ other supporting materials, such as
 - ☐ cover letters to accompany mail-back questionnaires
 - ☐ introductory scripts for initial contact of respondents
 - ☐ necessary Paperwork Reduction Act compliance language
 - ☐ follow-up letters/reminders sent to respondents

The survey methodology presented on the expedited approval form includes a specific description of:

- ☐ (a) the respondent universe
 - ☐ (b) the sampling plan and all sampling procedures, including how respondents will be selected
 - ☐ (c) how the instrument will be administered
 - ☐ (d) expected response rate and confidence levels
 - ☐ (e) strategies for dealing with potential non-response bias
 - ☐ (f) a description of any pre-testing and peer review of the methods and/or the instrument is highly recommended.
-
- ☐ The burden hours reported on the expedited approval form include the number of burden hours associated with the initial contact of all individuals in the sample (i.e., including refusals), if applicable, and the number of burden hours associated with individuals expected to complete the survey instrument.
 - ☐ The package is properly formatted and sent to the NPS Social Science Program.

All submission packages must be formatted as MS Word documents (any recent version up to and including MS Word 2000) and sent via email to the NPS Social Science Program at the following address:

brian_forist@partner.nps.gov

Mission Statement

The objectives of the NPS Social Science Program are to conduct and promote state-of-the-art social science related to the mission of the National Park Service and deliver usable knowledge to NPS managers and to the public.



For additional information, contact:

Social Science Program
National Park Service
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Washington, DC 20240
tel: 202.208.6330
fax: 202.208.4620
<http://www.nps.gov/socialscience>